



Ministry of
Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

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Saskatchewan



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Log Number: 08-17-71
Week of April 21, 2008

MUSTARD CAPITAL INC. EARNS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARD

A rising star in the value-added agricultural industry, Mustard Capital Inc. (MCI) of Gravelbourg earned the top prize at the 2008 Economic Development Awards of Excellence held in Saskatoon.

The venture, owned by 75 local shareholders, received the outstanding initiative award from the Saskatchewan Economic Development Association. The award is presented annually to an agency that has successfully advanced the community, regional or provincial economy through an economic development initiative.

MCI operates a dry mustard milling facility that began as a community-led initiative of the Red Coat Regional Economic Development Authority (REDA) and the Gravelbourg Economic Development Committee.

Today, it is owned by a group of 75 local shareholders, with financial contributions from the local REDA, the Town of Gravelbourg, the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Saskatchewan fund, and other government agencies.

The company employs 10 people and has a production capacity of approximately 5,000 tonnes annually.

The community wanted to build upon its comparative strengths in pursuing an opportunity in value-added agriculture. "They examined a few different crops, and the one that emerged that showed the most potential was mustard," said MCI Chief Executive Officer Tom Halpenny.

The next step was to complete a feasibility study to examine the economic potential of mustard. From there, a full-blown business plan was developed. The time frame from conception to the delivery of a business plan in spring 2007 was six years. Production began in fall 2007.

Today, MCI supplies processed, high-quality yellow, oriental and brown mustard ingredients all over the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. More than 90 per cent of the company's product is exported, with the largest share sent to the United States. The products are used for prepared mustards, flavour enhancers, binders and extenders.

According to Halpenny, essentially all of MCI's mustard supply is grown in Saskatchewan.

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Product lines are an important avenue for expansion. "We offer some unique products that others aren't offering, and some that only a few others are offering," Halpenny said. "We have the capabilities to partially de-oil the mustard. Those are some of the areas where we hope to base our expansion."

Despite challenges involving the value of the U.S. dollar, the future looks bright for Mustard Capital Inc.

"We have a growth strategy as we acquire some success in the marketplace and build some relationships with customers," Halpenny said. "Essentially, we have a three-tier expansion plan."

The final tier of the plan will be complete when MCI operates from a large, stand-alone facility, Halpenny said.

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FCC AGRI-SPIRIT FUND ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is once again providing \$500,000 through its AgriSpirit Fund to support capital projects in rural communities across the country.

The AgriSpirit Fund was established in 2004. "We saw a real need to support communities, especially in their capital projects," said Brenda Stasuik, Manager of Corporate Responsibility.

"Places like the local rink are central locations for people to get together. We wanted a way to accept applications for all the good stuff that's going on out there from these volunteers, and then be able to support them."

Stasuik also notes that FCC's clients and employees are spread throughout rural Canada, and the AgriSpirit Fund provides an ideal opportunity to support their efforts.

The fund will be accepting applications for 2008 between May 1 and June 16. Successful applicants will be notified in October.

To be eligible, an organization must be set up for charitable purposes, be an agricultural society, or be partnered with a municipal government that agrees to handle the financial management of the project.

Grants of between \$5,000 and \$25,000 are available for community improvement projects involving construction, renovation and/or the purchase of necessary equipment. Examples include rural community centres, recreation centres, sports facilities, playgrounds, care homes, food banks and emergency service units.

To maintain its rural focus, FCC stipulates that the fund is only available to communities of under 100,000 people. No community is too small to apply.

To date, FCC has funded 180 capital projects for a total of \$1.8 million. In Saskatchewan, an amount of \$392,200 has been allocated.

"We see this as a really important thing to be doing out there for rural Canada. We received more than 700 applications last year, so that's an indication that people are passionate about their communities and we're happy to help them out," Stasuik said.

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All applications are to be submitted online through the program's website, <http://www.agrispirit.ca/>. Interested applicants will also find on the site details of the fund's eligibility criteria, application process, success stories and answers to some of the more common questions.

Headquartered in Regina, FCC is Canada's largest provider of business and financial services to farms and agri-businesses. For more information on the corporation and its operations, visit <http://www.fcc-fac.ca/>.

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Log Number: 08-17-73
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LIVESTOCK PREDATION PROGRAM PROVIDES VALUABLE SERVICE

Many livestock producers in the province have experienced first-hand the trouble that predatory wildlife can pose to their operations.

With tight profit margins common in the agricultural industry, farmers can ill-afford to lose animals to a roving predator looking for an easy meal.

To help alleviate the problem for the province's producers, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture has funded a Livestock Intervention Predation Program for a number of years.

"The Ministry provided \$290,000 in the 2007-2008 fiscal year for the predation program," said Greg Haase, the Director of Saskatchewan Agriculture's Livestock Development Branch.

The initiative is a joint effort involving three parties. While the Ministry of Agriculture funds the program, the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board (SSDB) administers it, with some assistance from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment.

"From our perspective, we really count on and appreciate the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board and the work they do," Haase said. "They do just a super job, and are very effective in managing that program. Without their oversight, these situations would be much more of a problem."

The program is available to all livestock producers in the province. To date, it has responded to calls from producers raising cattle, swine, sheep, goats, turkeys, elk and horses who have experienced losses due to predation.

"It's intended to provide a service to livestock producers who are having a problem with predators, coyotes mainly, but really any wildlife that goes after their livestock," Haase noted. "It applies to any species, not only sheep but cattle, as well. Actually, cattle producers seem to be the most common users of the program."

The program oversees a network of approximately 80 predation managers located throughout the province. These individuals are qualified hunters or trappers who, in many cases, have also assisted Saskatchewan Environment or local rural municipalities with similar issues. They are often recommended to the SSDB, since the board strives to ensure the people delivering this important service to producers have the necessary experience and credentials.

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"We sometimes arrange additional training for the predation managers, as well," said Gord Schroeder, Executive Director of the SSDB. "We want to make sure they have as many tools as possible that they can go out there and use. If they feel they require a better understanding in a given area, we'll try to get some training for them so that they have as many options as possible for dealing with a situation."

Five steps are generally followed when help is required through the predation program. First, a producer with an animal that has been killed or injured by predators will call the SSDB at 1-877-299-6999 for assistance. The board will then contact the predation manager who will be handling the matter. The predation manager will contact the Saskatchewan Environment conservation officer in the region to make him or her aware of the situation and receive the proper permits. Once this is done, the predation manager contacts the producer to arrange a farm visit. Finally, the farm visit is made and a producer waiver is obtained.

Once these steps have been completed, the predation manager is able to conduct his or her duties as required to help alleviate the producer's predation problem.

"When it comes to coyotes and other predators, what you'll often find is that there are a couple of aggressors that are causing the problems, so we try to eliminate those particular animals and go from there. We do not go into a situation and destroy everything," Schroeder said.

"If the predation managers notice any management issues at the site that might be contributing to the problem, they also will bring those to the producer's attention."

The funding provided is used to pay the per diems and expenses of the predation managers, making the program free to producers.

"We're finding it's been a very beneficial service to the province's livestock producers," Haase noted. "Saskatchewan Agriculture has been happy to help them keep their animals safe from harm and also to help protect their bottom lines in the process."

More information on the Livestock Predation Intervention Program can be found on the SSDB website at www.sksheep.com/predation.htm.

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INVASIVE ALIEN PLANT PROGRAM ACHIEVES GOALS

As the Invasive Alien Plant Program nears the end of a two-year Agri-Environmental Group Plan (AEGP) project, staff reflect upon the successes that have helped to exclude, eradicate and contain weeds that threaten the quality of forage plants and alter habitats for desirable plants, wildlife and livestock.

The Invasive Alien Plant project is an AEGP project that was funded under the environmental pillar of the Agriculture Policy Framework and jointly managed by Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) and Saskatchewan Agriculture.

Invasive alien plants (IAPs) are weeds that have migrated to North America from overseas. According to Harvey Anderson, Group Planning Advisor with the AEGP - Invasive Alien Plant project, one of the reasons these plants become a serious problem is they are not under pressure from the natural enemies that would be present in their native habitats. As a result, following a naturalization process that can last from a handful to more than 50 years, they expand aggressively and threaten Saskatchewan's own native plants and crops.

The approach used to combat IAPs evolves through various phases, including "early detection and eradication" when populations are new and small, "containment and integrated control," once they are established and spreading, and "coping" once they are widespread. Integrated weed control is a critical component of management during both the containment and coping phases.

According to Anderson, integrated weed management programs, depending on habitat, can employ a variety of tools, including herbicides, biological controls, cultural controls such as cultivation, mechanical controls such as mowing, and selected grazing. When these are used in a non-conflicting way, they can be very effective.

"Using these techniques in the proper order and timeframe will make up your total package for management," Anderson said. However, he cautions against becoming overly reliant on herbicides, as they are only one of the many tools available. Herbicides are often the more costly and, usually, short-term solution.

Rural municipalities are among the most important partners in weed control. *The Noxious Weed Act* names 41 plants that property owners are required to control, most of which are invasive alien species. RMs are empowered with the authority to enforce this legislation through the appointment of a weed inspector.

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Over time, weed inspectors have increased their levels of training, which has contributed to the success in managing invasive plants more effectively. In addition, many municipalities have banded together into Co-operative Weed Management Areas in order to co-ordinate their efforts on weed management and to achieve economies of scale. By sharing a weed inspector, there is more uniform control over a wider area. Leading-edge municipalities have even begun exploring longer-term weed management plans as a part of the AEGP Invasive Alien Plant project, and bringing other stakeholder partners into the discussion on IAPS as well.

Other achievements which Anderson notes have contributed to the success of the AEGP Invasive Plant project include the increasing participation of First Nations and the introduction of hand-held GPS units and electronic mapping systems to help document the most important "pathways of spread," or methods of movement.

Upon completion of the timeframe set out in the AEGP-IAP project, Anderson is hopeful that activities will continue because of the plan's effectiveness.

"Right now, the environment and biodiversity are higher priorities, both with the provincial and federal governments and, I think, with average taxpayers," he stated. "I am hopeful that funding for this type of project can be maintained, to continue the momentum that has been started."

Additionally, Anderson hopes that more producers and organizations will become involved in an Invasive Plant Council being organized by the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan (NPSS).

"I encourage corporations that care about or are affected by invasive weeds to get involved in the Invasive Plant Council and contribute towards its success," he said. To find out more about the role of the council, interested parties should contact the NPSS at (306) 668-3940.

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Week of April 21, 2008

STOCK PERSON'S SCHOOL DRAWS FROM ACROSS THE PRAIRIES

Stock Person's School opens its doors May 1, as participants from across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba come to improve their knowledge of animal care.

The Canadian Agriculture Skills Service (CASS)-approved event attracts 125 livestock producers on an annual basis.

Stock Person's School is an event born from a partnership between the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan (FACS) and the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) at the University of Saskatchewan. The event also receives support from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

The organizations have offered a one-day conference each spring, since 2000, that draws from across the Prairies. Initially, the Stock Person's School was targeted for Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration and pasture riders, according to FACS Executive Director Adele Buettner. The focus has since expanded to attract other cattle and dairy producers, 4-H clubs and horse owners.

The topics covered range from nutrition, including feed and grazing, to reproduction and disease management. A key to the success of Stock Person's School is its responsiveness to the informational needs of its audience.

"Our topics are really timely," Buettner said. "When we put our agenda together, we form a draft and circulate it among past participants and some managers in the pasture riders' program. We get really good feedback."

The presenters represent veterinary medicine colleges, the Western Beef Development Centre and an expert private producer specializing in rotational grazing. "We have experts on the agenda – credible, reputable people. They are there to share knowledge based on fact and the most recent research," Buettner said.

"What the participants are going to take away is information that will help make them better at their jobs, as herds people, as cattlemen, as ranchers. They will have a better understanding of feed, a better understanding of herd health and general animal care issues."

The session runs from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on May 1. The cost to attend is \$136.50 per person.

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More information on the program and registration for the 2008 edition of Stock Person's School can be found on the FACS website at <http://www.facs.sk.ca/> or by calling (306) 249-3227.

Buettner recommends that participants register early, as the event is usually a popular draw.

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